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ABSTRACT

This paper develops some generalizations about uses of political scientists and political science in government. Information is based on essays written by political scientists which appear in the "Political Science Utilization Directory." Developed by the Policy Studies Organization, this publication includes largely verbatim survey results concerning how politicial scientists think they and their discipline have been and can be used to better advantage in government agencies. All directory contributors are members of the American Political Science Association and are employed in government at federal, state, and local levels. The 1975 survey (the most recent) offers 108 short essays covering 61 government agencies. Generalizations are offered in six areas: (1) political science-related job opportunities exist in both generalist positions and in positions which require specialized knowledge of specific policies or programs involving, for example, energy, criminal justice, or labor; (2) skills in policy analysis and program evaluation are particularly helpful; (3) political science students should receive more interdisciplinary training and should be imbued with concern for the substance of government programs as well as knowledge about methods for evaluating alternatives; (4) political science knowledge is particularly valuable in governmental research activities; (5) political science contributes methodological tools and data sources for policy analysis; and (6) political science helps policy practitioners become aware of existing and/or ongoing studies which may be useful in their own work. Among conclusions offered are that political scientists are being increasingly better trained and placed in government, including positions which involve analyzing alternative public policies and programs. (DB)

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GENERALIZING ABOUT THE USE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE IN GOVERNMENT

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SO 013 693

For Presentation on the Panel Dealing with
"Alternatives to Academic Careers for Political Scientists in the 1980's"
At the 1981 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association

Summary of

GENERALIZING ABOUT THE USE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE IN GOVERNMENT

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The purpose of this article is to develop some generalizations about the actual and potential uses of political scientists and political science in government. The generalizations are largely based on the essays written by political scientists in government which appear in the *Political Science Utilization Directory*. The topic is timely in view of the need for alternatives to academic careers and academic research-funding.

The job opportunities can be classified as generalist/specialist, administrative/legislative/judicial, and federal/state/local. An especially relevant classification for political science is whether the position includes policy and/or program evaluation work. That is becoming an increasingly important part of formal job-descriptions and of what many positions actually involve. The policy analysis work tends to be part of a full-time administrative or research position, although full-time evaluation positions are increasingly being established.

Respondents to the *Political Science Utilization Directory* often mention the need for developing skills in policy analysis and program evaluation, including skills in social-science research-methods and the newly-developing decision-sciences. Training is also needed with regard to policy formation and implementation processes, as well as substantive knowledge in at least a few specific policy fields. Political scientists can offer a relevant combination of skills and knowledge in methods, process, substance, and theory.

Political science training programs can be made more effective in preparing students for government work by providing more balance between graduate/undergraduate work, training for teaching/practice, interdisciplinary/political-science emphasis, substance/methods, classroom/field experience, policy formation/implementation, rationalist/incrementalist methods, local/state/national/cross-national levels, goal-achieving/goal-questioning, and research-doing/knowledge-absorbing. Placement programs can be made more effective by actively soliciting government job-information, reading government job-notices, obtaining the views of insiders, having interactive workshops, encouraging help from political scientists in government, and developing government contacts.

The research uses tend to be of three kinds. Most important may be the general orientation that people in government have from political and social science learned in graduate school, college, high school and elementary school that is influenced by political science textbooks and research. Second, the adoption of general policies is often accelerated or made more respectable by referring to relevant political and social science literature. On a third level of making specific administrative decisions, neither political nor social science is so likely to be consulted, as contrasted to on-the-job knowledge or possibly an in-house report.

Political and social scientists have been increasingly working with policy-relevant subjects during the 1970s, due to improved tools/data, the stimuli of political issues, interdisciplinary interaction, and the relative attractiveness of government research-money, as compared to lessening university research-funds. The substantive issues change, but the concern for policy studies is still high across a variety of ideologies, disciplines, and subfields.

There is a need for facilitating communication between academic researchers and policy practitioners through more academic-practitioner collaboration, creative/responsible academic research centers, non-technical journals, program evaluation requirements, professional intermediaries, two-way visiting appointments, rewarding practitioners for doing papers/articles, and rewarding academics for doing consulting/outreach.

Political scientists are being better trained and placed in government, including positions which involve analyzing alternative public policies and programs. Political science is also being better used in government, as political science shows more concern for specific policy problems and policy implementation to supplement its traditional emphasis on policy formation. There is, however, substantial room for improvement, especially since the contemporary policy orientation is still so young, and since the need has become greater for useful interchange in both directions.

GENERALIZING ABOUT THE USE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE IN GOVERNMENT

The purpose of this article is to develop some generalizations about the actual and potential use of political scientists and politicial science in government. Academics possibly need to become more aware of the opportunities for jobs and research support that government provides and to become better trained and motivated for dealing with those opportunities. Likewise practitioners possibly need to become more aware of what academics might have to contribute and to become more oriented toward absorbing those potential contributions.

The generalizations are largely based on the Political Science Utilization Directory. It is a directory developed by the Policy Studies Organization, which surveys members of the American Political Science Association who hold positions in government at the federal, state, and local levels. The survey asks open-ended questions concerning how political science and political scientists have been and can be used better in the government agencies for which they work. The results of the survey are published largely verbatim in the Political Science Utilization Directory, which is organized on an agency-by-agency basis. The most recent survey was made in 1975. It resulted in coverage of 61 agencies based on 108 short essays from knowledgeable insiders. Their perceptions and insights are still quite relevant as of 1981. The Policy Studies Organization, however, is planning another survey, which will include economists, sociologists, psychologists, other social scientists, and possibly natural scientists working in government. That directory will facilitate comparisons across scholarly disciplines. This present article differs from Nagel and Neef, "The Use of Political Science: The Practitioner's Perspective," 8 PS 376-380 (1975), which emphasized the descriptive reporting of quantitative data and quotations from the survey rather than the development of descriptive and prescriptive generalizations.

Discussing the use of political science in government is especially timely in view of the need for developing alternative careers for political science graduate students. The demand has lessened for academic positions due largely to the plateauing of the

number of undergraduates to be taught by political scientists. The subject is also timely due to the increase in government as a source of research funding relative to the decrease in the research budgets of universities, foundations, and individual researchers. Possibly more important than those somewhat mercenary considerations is the increasing recognition that political and social science may potentially have much to contribute to better governmental decision-making.

I. PLACING POLITICAL SCIENTISTS IN GOVERNMENT

A. THE NATURE OF THE JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The nature of the job opportunities in government for political scientists can be classified as generalist positions and specialist positions. The generalist positions are those for which one can be hired without specialized knowledge of specific policies or programs, such as energy, criminal justice, housing, labor, etc. Specialized knowledge may, however, be acquired on the job. Both generalist and specialist positions are available with regard to legislative staffing and administrative agency positions. Legislative positions though tend to be more general in nature than administrative positions. As a result, a higher percentage of legislative positions are held by people with political science graduate or undergraduate degrees than the percentage of people holding administrative positions. Political scientists are more likely to be found in the generalist positions because they tend to lack more specialized knowledge and they gravitate toward positions that relate to policy formation rather than implementation.

Another way of classifying government job opportunities for political scientists is in terms of whether or not there is a policy/program evaluation component associated with the position. That is becoming an increasingly important part of formal job descriptions in government and of what the jobs actually involve. The increase is due partly to evaluation requirements in appropriations and budgeting, sunset legislation, and to budget cutbacks which require evaluating alternative programs to

decide which ones should be most reduced. Evaluation work is seldom a full-time job, but is often part of a middle-level public administration position or legislative staff position. Full-time evaluation positions have, however, been established in recent years, as part of virtually all the federal departments. Well-organized units are associated with the Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Defense, State, and Labor. At a more general level within the federal executive branch is the Office of Management and Budget and the White House Domestic Policy Staff. Within the jurisdiction of Congress are such evaluation units as the Congressional Budget Office, Congressional Reference Service, General Accounting Office, and the Office of Technology Assessment. The judicial branch has its Federal Judicial Center and the Administrative Office of the U. S. Courts.

Job opportunities can also be classified as federal, state, or local. The federal positions tend to be more visible and glamorous, but the state and local positions together may be more numerous. They may also be growing more rapidly, especially if there is more delegation of authority to state and local governments, and an upgrading of their procedures. Analogous to the federal evaluation units are similar agencies at the state and local level. Offices of the state auditor generals are increasingly performing evaluation functions similar to the General Accounting Office. State legislative reference services seek to emulate the Congressional Reference Service. State legislatures now often have a rules committee or other committee that has a staff for evaluating the impact of proposed or adopted legislation or administrative regulations, although the analysis generally emphasizes impact on the prior legal rules rather than on the state and its people.

B. THE SKILLS AND TRAINING NEEDED

Many of the entries in the Political Science Utilization Directory mention that the chances of political scientists being hired in government positions are increased as a result of obtaining training that develops skills with regard to policy analysis and program evaluation even as of 1975. Training in policy analysis should include

foundation courses in social science research methods, especially methods that relate to questionnaires, interviewing, sampling, goal measurement, prediction, causal analysis, data processing, systematic observation, and report writing. The methodological training should also include courses in systematic decision-making which are increasingly being offered in political science departments and interdisciplinary policy-analysis programs. One does not have to develop skills at an expert level in terms of being able to produce social science research or optimizing models, but at least at the level of being able to interpret such research and modeling.

The substantive training of appropriately prepared political scientists should include courses that deal with how and why alternative policies get adopted and implemented. Substantive training should also include courses that cover the basic issues and references in at least a few specific policy fields. The methodology and process material will then have a more concrete basis of understanding, and doing so can facilitate entry into more specialized positions. Standard courses in public administration are also advisable for political scientists who are interested in government work.

Political scientists sometimes have feelings of inferiority relative to economists, lawyers, or social-psychological program-evaluation people in obtaining government jobs. They should, however, not disparage the eclectic nature of political science with regard to both methods and substance. Political scientists can bridge the raw empiricism of social-psychological statistical analysis and the often unrealistic deductive models of economists. Political scientists can be particularly sensitive in their analytic work to the problems of policy adoption and implementation. Other social scientists often fail to adequately consider political and administrative feasibility. Legalistically-oriented lawyers may be less in demand than in the past now that governmental problems are increasingly viewed in terms of benefits, costs, impact, and evaluation, rather than in terms of litigation, drafting, and negotiation.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING RELEVANT POLITICAL SCIENCE TRAINING AND PLACEMENT

The political scientists in government were asked to make recommendations for improving the relevant training of political scientists, as part of the Political Science Utilization Directory. Similar questions were also asked of heads of graduate political science departments. Their responses are reported in the Policy Studies Directory (PSO, 1976). Those recommendations from the practitioners and the academics tend to emphasize such matters as the following:

1. Training should occur at both the graduate and undergraduate levels with regard to policy studies and public administration.
2. At the graduate level students should be trained for both government work and for teaching others the knowledge and skills needed for government work.
3. The training should be interdisciplinary in nature although it does not necessarily have to involve extensive course-taking outside the political science department. Political scientists are capable of incorporating non-political science material into their teaching.
4. The training needs to include a concern for both the substance of government programs and the methods for evaluating alternatives.
5. Both classroom and field experience should be provided. The field experience can include internships, working with faculty members who do consulting work, participating in realistic problem-solving simulations, and inviting more practitioner involvement in training programs to provide at least vicarious field experience.
6. The program should deal with policy formation, implementation, reformulation, and possible termination so students can have greater understanding of the total policy process.
7. Methods should include both rationalist methods that emphasize determining the relevant benefits and costs for the main alternatives, and incrementalist

methods that emphasize building on and explaining existing decisions.

8. Concern should be expressed for governmental problems at the local, state, national, and cross-national levels.
9. Students should be capable of working with given goals and also of questioning the goals themselves.
10. Research experience is needed by way of developing reports, co-authoring articles, drafting seminar papers, and being required to do a thesis or extended essay at the B.A. and M.A. levels with a dissertation at the Ph.D. level.

Good training requires good placement procedures in order to be fully useful. Answers to the hiring questions in the Political Science Utilization Directory explicitly or implicitly suggest the following procedures that might be tried to improve placement of political scientists in government:

1. The APSA Personnel Service might actively solicit job notices from numerous relevant agencies that can be placed in the APSA Personnel Newsletter.
2. Political science graduate students can be referred to the Public Administration Times, which is a bi-weekly newspaper that contains a number of government job notices for which political scientists can qualify.
3. The APSA and/or PSO could solicit general statements from people in government agencies who are responsible for making hiring decisions, to determine their views concerning needed training/skills and appropriate procedures for making successful placements. Those kinds of questions may be part of the Social Science Utilization Directory, which is designed to expand on the Political Science Utilization Directory.
4. Have more panels, workshops, symposia, and other types of sessions at APSA and regional political science meetings where academics and practitioners can discuss and develop ideas for better placement and training.

5. Encourage members of APSA who have government positions to aid in placement the way political scientists at universities are often cultivated and called upon to aid in placing graduate students from their alma maters.
6. Faculty in political science departments who are involved in placement need to develop more contacts with people in government the way contacts have been made with people at other universities to facilitate placement.
7. Ideas for placing political scientists in interest groups and research institutes are contained in the Policy Publishers and Associations Directory (PSO, 1980), and the Policy Research Centers Directory (PSO, 1978), as other non-academic opportunities for political science graduate students.

II. GETTING POLITICAL SCIENCE USED IN GOVERNMENT

A. THE NATURE OF THE RESEARCH USES

There are three general ways in which political science gets used in government. Those ways relate to general orientation, policy decisions, and administrative decisions. On the matter of general orientation, people in government are probably substantially influenced by the training they have received concerning governmental and social science matters in graduate school, college, high school, and elementary school. That kind of general background is to some extent shaped by academic political scientists who write textbooks for use in courses at all four of those levels, especially American government textbooks and to a lesser extent high school civics textbooks. The high school materials are generally written by people with backgrounds in schools of education rather than political science departments, but they often collaborate with political scientists and even more often draw upon the literature of political scientists.

When it comes to adopting general policies, research of a policy studies nature may be referred to, although not necessarily general social science research. For example, when Congress is contemplating the adoption of a new criminal sentencing system, the hearings do refer to research that has been done on discretionary sentencing versus nondiscretionary sentencing, imprisonment versus community-based

corrections, imprisonment versus capital punishment, or other such issues. One can, however, argue that just because hearings or Justice Department reports refer to such research, does not mean the research changes the minds of policy-makers. That would be a rare occurrence. What the research probably tends to do is clarify and reinforce preconceived perceptions, values, and recommendations. For example, sentencing with less discretion for parole boards and judges is now widely accepted by policy-makers. Lessened discretion was previously being advocated in criminology research to provide greater deterrence and to reduce disparities. Conservative policy-makers tend to like the deterrence justification and liberal policy-makers tend to like the disparities-reduction justification. Thus if policy research can reinforce preconceived values, then it can serve a useful purpose in accelerating the adoption and respectability of new public policies. Policy research that cuts across places and time points can also have important theoretical significance in understanding the causal relations between policies and goals.

When it comes to making specific administrative decisions, neither policy studies nor social science is likely to be consulted. The relevant knowledge in those situations is factual knowledge specific to the situation and the job. If any kind of material is likely to be consulted, it would probably be some kind of in-house report. That report, however, may be prepared by a person with a graduate or undergraduate background in political science, public administration, or a related social science.

B. GETTING SCHOLARLY RESEARCHERS TO WORK WITH POLICY-RELEVANT SUBJECTS IN A MORE USEFUL WAY

Getting political science used in government requires better communication from academics and better receptiveness from practitioners. Political science academics have been showing a substantial increase in policy studies during the 1970s. That increase seems to be due to such factors as (1) new methodological tools and data sources for doing more meaningful policy analysis; (2) the stimuli of social movements dealing with such matters as civil rights, peace, poverty, environmental protection, and sexual equality; (3) closer interdisciplinary relations, especially those facilitated by new academic programs and organizations; (4) the increasing relative attractiveness of job

opportunities and grants in policy-related fields; and (5) a feeling that there has been a near saturation regarding the application of quantitative methods to non-policy-relevant topics.

As of the 1980s there may be a retreat away from controversial public policy matters among some social scientists due to their perceptions that the times have become more conservative and due to their lessening of enthusiasm for the public policy issues of the 70s and the 60s. A concern for public policy among political scientists, however, is non-ideological in the sense that political scientists of a variety of ideological orientations are closely associated with policy studies. Public policy controversies do not necessarily lessen in importance, although they may change in content. There has been a shift from Viet Nam, civil rights, and poverty as of about 1970 to inflation, energy, and productivity as of about 1980, with environment, women's rights, and Watergate in between.

There is a need for academics to communicate in more understandable ways to practitioners who may not have the time or the backgrounds to seek to master technical presentations. Academics are increasingly writing for more popular reading as reflected in such journals as Public Interest, Society, Social Policy, and the Policy Review. They are subscribed to by practitioners in substantial numbers as is the Evaluation Review, Public Administration Review, and Foreign Affairs, but not so much journals like Public Policy, Policy Analysis, Policy Sciences, or even the Policy Studies Journal. Some academics write for even more popular journals like the New Republic and National Review, but that is relatively rare. Academic books are often read by practitioners after they complete their formal education including books by publishers who actively seek to reach practitioners such as Basic Books, Sage, Brookings, American Enter-

prise Institute, Urban Institute, and Lexington-Heath.

C. GETTING POLICY PRACTITIONERS TO BE MORE AWARE OF USEFUL STUDIES THAT RESEARCHERS MAY BE DOING

Formal devices to facilitate communicating the increased policy research to policy practitioners include:

1. More research projects that involve academic-practitioner collaboration.
2. More research centers that can combine (a) the creativity and broadness that is often associated with university research with (b) the responsibility for meeting specifications and deadlines that is often associated with non-university research.
3. More journals that can communicate technical findings in nontechnical language to a wider audience.
4. More requirements in legislation that proposed programs be accompanied by environmental impact statements, technological assessment, and social assessment, and that ongoing programs be periodically evaluated.
5. More staff personnel associated with legislatures, administrative agencies, and courts whose function is to distill and translate scholarly research to make it more useable to busy policy-makers, and to inform the research community more clearly as to what is needed.

Those ideas can generally be found in the research suggestions of the Political Science Utilization Directory from practitioners, the Policy Studies Directory from academics, and the Policy Research Centers Directory from people associated with policy research centers. They also suggest the need for less formal devices like relevant convention panels, conferences, think tanks, visiting appointments of academics to government agencies, visiting appointments of practitioners to academic programs, inviting practitioners to participate in academic symposia, rewarding practitioners for presenting papers and publishing articles, and rewarding academics for

doing consulting and other work with government agencies.

III. SOME CONCLUSIONS

Political scientists are being better trained and placed in government, including positions which involve analyzing alternative public policies and programs. Political science is also being better used in government, as political science shows more concern for specific policy problems and policy implementation to supplement its traditional emphasis on policy formation. There is, however, substantial room for improvement, especially since the contemporary policy orientation is so young. Much can be done with regard to both training and research, even in times of tight budgets. Meaningful training programs can often be established or expanded by cross-listing faculty, courses, and students without developing new facilities, faculty lines, or fellowship money. Meaningful research projects can often be pursued without buying additional equipment, conducting expensive surveys, or obtaining released time. The general knowledge from such training and research can be relevant to being a better practitioner. The specific knowledge can also sometimes be relevant to reinforcing and accelerating the adoption and implementation of important public polices.

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